

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02
SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01 CU-04 /074 W
-----047952 250906Z /15

R 241620Z AUG 77
FM AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5028
INFO AMEMBASSY ACCRA
AMEMBASSY BAMAKO
AMEMBASSY COTONOU
AMEMBASSY DAKAR
AMEMBASSY LOME
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY NIAMEY
AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU
AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ABIDJAN 8405

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, IV
SUBJECT: IVORIAN GOVERNMENT REFORM: WAITING FOR THE OTHER SHOE

REF: (A) ABIDJAN 7203 (B) ABIDJAN 7277

1. ONE MONTH AFTER SWEEPING CABINET CHANGES DISCUSSED REFTEL A, GOIC IS STILL SORTING ITSELF OUT, AND THERE ARE REVIEWED RUMORS ABOUT A FURTHER CABINET SHAKE-UP LATER THIS YEAR. ALTHOUGH PUBLIC OPINION IN IVORY COAST IS HARD TO ASSESS, DISMISSALS OF SEVERAL MINISTERS ALLEGEDLY INVOLVED IN CORRUPTION HAVE APPARENTLY BEEN WELL-RECEIVED BUT HAVE ALSO STIMULATED PRESSURE FOR FURTHER CHANGES. PROGRESS ON ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS DESCRIBED IN ABIDJAN 7277 HAS SO FAR BEEN MINIMAL, BUT PRESIDENT HOUPHOUET CLEARLY INTENDS TO MAINTAIN MOMENTUM.

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2. SINCE THE JULY 20 ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE NEW CABINET, HOUPHOUET HAS HAD WELL-PUBLICIZED MEETINGS WITH ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICIALS, PREFECTS AND SUBPREFECTS; WITH CUSTOMS, POLICE AND OTHER ENFORCEMENT OFFICIALS; AND WITH THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY, INCLUDING FRENCH AND LEBANESE REPRESENTATIVES, EXHORTING THEM TO HARD WORK, HONESTY, AND COMMUNITY SPIRIT. HOUPHOUET'S DONATION OF HIS YAMOUSSOUKRO PLANTATIONS TO THE STATE HAS RECEIVED EXTENSIVE PUBLICITY, ALTHOUGH

NO ONE HAS YET FOLLOWED HIS EXAMPLE.

3. EDUCATION: A FAR-REACHING REFORM IN IVORIAN EDUCATION IS UNDER DISCUSSION BY THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE OF THE PDCI (CHAIRER BY FORMER FONMIN USHER), AND THE IVORIAN STUDENT MOVEMENT (MEECI). THERE HAVE LONG BEEN PRESSURES FOR AN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM MORE ADAPTED TO IVORIAN CIRCUMSTANCES THAN TO TRADITIONAL FRENCH VALUES. LESS THAN TWENTY PERCENT OF APPLICANTS PASSED THE BACCALAUREAT EXAM, REQUIRED FOR ENTRANCE TO UNIVERSITY, IN 1977, AND EDUCATION MINISTER AKOTO YAO HAS BEEN ACCUSED OF ELITISM BY SOME STUDENTS AND PRESSED TO LOWER OR CHANGE "BAC" STANDARDS. THE REFORM PROPOSED BY USHER, WHICH HAS NOT YET BEEN MADE PUBLIC, IS TO INCREASE CONCENTRATION ON TECHNICAL AND JOB-ORIENTED EDUCATION AND REPORTEDLY HAS BEEN OPPOSED BY AKOTO YAO. MEECI HAS TRADITIONALLY BEEN CONTROLLED BY THE GOIC, BUT ITS LEADERSHIP IS UNDER ATTACK BY REFORM-MINDED STUDENTS. ON AUGUST 24, AN MEECI CONGRESS WAS DISSOLVED BY PDCI SECRETARY GENERAL YACE BECAUSE OF SQUABBLES BETWEEN ITS MEMBERS AND ITS LEADERSHIP. DETAILS REMAIN UNCLEAR (EMBASSY WILL REPORT FURTHER) BUT CHANGES IN EDUCATION SYSTEM AND PROBABLY PERSONALITIES MAY BE EXPECTED.

4. IVORIANIZATION: MINISTER OF LABOR VANI BI TRA, NOW ALSO CHARGED WITH IVORIANIZATION OF THE ADMINISTRATION, TOLD CHARGE THAT HE HAD HAD NO TIME TO WORK ON ANY PROGRAM OF ACTION AND HOPED TO "TAKE A HOLIDAY TO THINK THINGS THROUGH." PRESSURES FROM IVORIAN STUDENTS AND THE INCREASING STRESS BY HOUPHOUET AND OTHERS
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ON THE NEED TO REPLACE EXPATRIATES WITH IVORIANS WOULD SUGGEST A NEW SENSE OF URGENCY TO WHICH VANI BI TRA WOULD DO WELL TO PAY NEED.

5. CORRUPTION: HOUPHOUET HAS ISSUED AN ODD COMMUNIQUE, PUBLISHED ALSO IN FOREIGN PAPERS (WASHINGTON POST AUGUST 7) SAYING THAT HE HAS NEVER ACCEPTED BRIBES AND THAT IVORIANS ARE "UNITED AGAINST THIS SCOURGE." IN A PERCEPTIVE ARTICLE AUGUST 19, "JEUNE AFRIQUE" NAMES DEFENSE MINISTER M'BAHIA BLE, INTERIOR MINISTER THIERRY-LEBBE, AND COMMERCE MINISTER SERI GNOLEBA AS DUE FOR DISMISSAL. EMBASSY HAS ALSO HEARD THAT COMMUNICATIONS MINISTER KONE HAS BEEN QUITE OPEN IN SEEKING COMMISSIONS, PERHAPS IN THE EXPECTATION THAT HE IS ALSO ON THE NEXT LIST.

6. NEW KEY MINISTERS, AKE IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS, BRA KANON IN AGRICULTURE, AND KONE IN FINANCE, ECONOMY AND PLAN, HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN RESTRUCTURING MINISTRIES AND ALMOST INACCESSIBLE. RESHUFFLES OF THESE MINISTRIES WILL PROBABLY BE ANNOUNCED IN COMING WEEKS.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 ABIDJAN 8405

7. COMMENT: THIS UNACCUSTOMED FURORE IS NOT LIKELY TO ALTER BASIC POLICIES OR AFFECT IVORY COAST'S STATUS AS THE MOST SUCCESSFUL STATE ECONOMICALLY IN THIS PART OF AFRICA AND ONE OF THE MOST STABLE POLITICALLY. NEVERTHELESS, HOUPHOUET CLEARLY INTENDS TO PUT HIS HOUSE THOROUGHLY IN ORDER, AND FURTHER CHANGES MAY BE EXPECTED. HOUPHOUET'S MOTIVATION IS PROBABLY DIVERSE: POLITICAL PRESSURE, PARTICULARLY FROM YOUNGER IVORIANS; CRITICISM OF CORRUPTION IN FOREIGN FINANCIAL CIRCLES; AND POSSIBLY A SENSE OF HIS OWN MORTALITY. ("JEUNE AFRIQUE" MENTIONS THE "ETHIOPIAN SPECTER," THE CHAOS FOLLOWING HAILE SELASSIE'S FALL). FOR THE TIME BEING, HOWEVER, HOUPHOUET IS VERY MUCH IN CHARGE AND THE NEW BROOM HE HAS TAKEN TO THE IVORIAN BODY POLITIC HAS NOT YET COMPLETED ITS WORK.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: GOVERNMENT REFORM
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 24-Aug-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977ABIDJA08405
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770307-0047
Format: TEL
From: ABIDJAN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770831/aaaaazko.tel
Line Count: 157
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
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Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 ABIDJAN 7203, 77 ABIDJAN 7277
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 18-Jan-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1509670
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: IVORIAN GOVERNMENT REFORM: WAITING FOR THE OTHER SHOE
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, IV
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/46b6de55-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009